

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE  
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS**

**ADMIRALTY LOCAL RULES**



Effective  
January 1, 2004

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NOTE: The court's local rules apply to all admiralty matters, unless the interests of justice require otherwise.

Note: The local admiralty rules shall be cited "LAR \_\_\_\_."

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## **PREFACE**

### **STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT<sup>\*</sup>**

The following standards of practice are to be observed by attorneys appearing in this Court:

In fulfilling his or her primary duty to the client, a lawyer must be ever conscious of the broader duty to the judicial system that serves both attorney and client.

A lawyer owes to the judiciary candor, diligence and utmost respect.

A lawyer owes to opposing counsel a duty of courtesy and cooperation, the observance of which is necessary for the efficient administration of our system of justice and the respect of the public it serves.

A lawyer unquestionably owes to the administration of justice the fundamental duties of personal dignity and professional integrity.

Lawyers should treat each other, the opposing party, the Court, and members of the Court staff with courtesy and civility and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times.

A client has no right to demand that counsel abuse the opposite party or indulge in offensive conduct. A lawyer shall always treat adverse witnesses and suitors with fairness and due consideration.

In adversary proceedings, clients are litigants and though ill feeling may exist between clients, such ill feeling should not influence a lawyer's conduct, attitude, or demeanor towards opposing lawyers.

Lawyers will be punctual in communications with others and in honoring scheduled appearances, and will recognize that neglect and tardiness are demeaning to the lawyer and to the judicial system.

If a fellow member of the Bar makes a just request for cooperation, or seeks scheduling accommodation, a lawyer will not arbitrarily or unreasonably withhold consent.

Effective advocacy does not require antagonistic or obnoxious behavior and members of the Bar will adhere to the higher standard of conduct which judges, lawyers, clients, and the public may rightfully expect.

<sup>\*</sup> These standards are incorporated into Civil LR 1.5.

## **Admiralty Local Rules**

### **LAR A - Scope and Definitions.**

1. Scope. The local admiralty rules apply only to civil actions that are governed by Rule A of the Supplemental Rules for Certain Admiralty and Maritime Claims (Supplemental Rule or Rules.) All other local rules are applicable in these cases, but to the extent that another local rule is inconsistent with the applicable local admiralty rule, the local admiralty rule shall govern.
2. Definitions. As used in these rules, "judicial officer" means a Judge of the District Court; "clerk of court" means the deputy clerk or Clerk of this Court; and, "marshal" means the United States Marshal and deputies.

### **LAR B - Attachment and Garnishment; Affidavit that Defendant Is Not Found Within the District.**

The affidavit required by Federal Supplemental Rule B(1) to accompany the complaint shall list the efforts made by or on behalf of plaintiff to find and serve the defendant within the district. The phrase "not found within the district" in Supplemental Rule B(1) means that, in an in personam action, the defendant cannot be served with the summons and complaint as provided in Fed.R.Civ.P. 4(d).

### **LAR C - Actions In Rem; Special Provisions.**

1. Undertakings in Lieu of Arrest. If, before or after commencement of suit, plaintiff accepts any written undertaking to respond on behalf of the vessel or other property sued in return for his or her foregoing the arrest or stipulating to the release of such vessel or other property, the undertaking shall become a defendant in place of the vessel or other property sued and be deemed referred to under the name of the vessel or other property in any pleading, order or judgment in the action referred to in the undertaking.
2. Intangible Property. The summons issued pursuant to Supplemental Rule C(3) shall direct the person having control of intangible property to show cause no later than ten (10) days after service why the intangible property should not be delivered to the Court to abide the judgment. A judicial officer for good cause shown may lengthen or shorten the time. Service of the

summons has the effect of an arrest of the intangible property and brings it within the control of the Court. The person who is served may deliver or pay over to the marshal the intangible property proceeded against to the extent sufficient to satisfy the plaintiff's claim. If such delivery or payment is made, the person served is excused from the duty to show cause. Claimants of the property may show cause as provided in Supplemental Rule C(6) why the property should not be delivered to or retained by the Court.

3. Notice of Action and Arrest.

- a. Publication. The notice required by Supplemental Rule C(4) shall be published once in a local newspaper of general circulation and plaintiff's attorney shall file a copy of the notice as it was published with the Clerk. The notice shall contain:
- (1) The Court name, title, and number of the action;
  - (2) The date of the arrest;
  - (3) The identity of the property arrested;
  - (4) The name, address, and telephone number of the attorney for plaintiff;
  - (5) A statement that the claim of a person who is entitled to possession or who claims an interest pursuant to Supplemental Rule C(6) must be filed with the Clerk and served on the attorney for plaintiff within ten (10) days after publication;
  - (6) A statement that an answer to the complaint must be filed and served within twenty (20) days after publication and that, otherwise, default may be entered and condemnation ordered;
  - (7) A statement that applications for intervention under Fed.R.Civ.P. 24 by persons claiming maritime liens or other interests shall be filed within the time fixed by the Court; and
  - (8) The name, address, and telephone number of the marshal.

- b. Filing of Proof of Publication. Plaintiff shall cause to be filed with the Clerk no later than thirty (30) days after the date of publication sworn proof of publication by or on behalf of the publisher of the newspaper in which notice was published, together with a copy of the publication or reproduction thereof.
- 4. Default In Action In Rem.
  - a. Notice Required. A party seeking a default judgment in an action in rem must show that due notice of the action and arrest of the property has been given (1) by publication as required in Local Rule C.3, (2) by service upon the master or other person having custody of the property, and (3) by service under Fed.R.Civ.P. 5(b) upon every other person who has not appeared in the action and is known to have an interest in the property.
  - b. Persons with Recorded Interests. (1) If the defendant property is a vessel documented under the laws of the United States, plaintiff must attempt to notify all persons named in the United States Coast Guard certificate of ownership. (2) If the defendant property is a vessel numbered as provided in the Federal Boat Safety Act, plaintiff must attempt to notify the persons named in the records of the issuing authority. (3) If the defendant property is of such character that there exists a governmental registry of recorded property interests or security interests in the property, the plaintiff must attempt to notify all persons named in the records of each such registry.
  - c. Failure to Give Notice. Failure to give notice as provided by this rule shall be grounds for setting aside the default under applicable rules but shall not affect title to property sold pursuant to order of sale or judgment.
- 5. Entry of Default and Default Judgment. After the time for filing an answer has expired, the plaintiff may apply for entry of default under Fed.R.Civ.P. 55(a). Default will be entered upon a showing that:
  - (a) Notice has been given as required by Local Rule C.4(a); and,
  - (b) Notice has been attempted as required by Local Rule C.4(b), where

appropriate; and,

- (c) The time for answer has expired; and,
- (d) No one has appeared to claim the property.

Judgment may be entered under Fed.R.Civ.P. 55(b) at any time after default has been entered.

#### **LAR D - Possessory, Petitory, And Partition Actions.**

1. Return Date. In an action under Supplemental Rule D, a judicial officer may order that the claim and answer be filed on a date earlier than twenty (20) days after arrest. The order may also set a date for expedited hearing of the action.

#### **LAR E - Actions In Rem And Quasi In Rem: General Provisions.**

1. Itemized Demand for Judgment. The demand for judgment in every complaint filed under Supplemental Rule B or C, except a demand for a salvage award, shall allege the dollar amount of the debt or damages for which the action was commenced. The demand for judgment shall also allege the nature of other items of damage. The amount of the special bond posted under Supplemental Rule E(5)(a) may be based upon these allegations.
2. Verification of Pleadings. Every complaint in Supplemental Rules B, C, and D actions shall be verified upon oath or solemn affirmation, or in the form provided by 28 U.S.C. § 1746, by a party or by an authorized officer of a corporate party. If no party or authorized corporate officer is present within the district, verification of a complaint may be made by an agent, attorney in fact, or attorney of record, who shall state the sources of the knowledge, information and belief contained in the complaint; declare that the document verified is true to the best of that knowledge, information, and belief; state why verification is not made by the party or an authorized corporate officer; and state that the affiant is authorized so to verify. A verification not made by a party or authorized corporate officer will be deemed to have been made as if verified personally by the party. If the verification was not made by a party or authorized corporate officer, any interested party may move, with or without requesting a stay, for the personal oath of a party or an authorized corporate officer, which shall be procured by commission or as otherwise



ordered.

3. Review by Judicial Officer.

- (a) Authorization to Issue Process. Except in actions by the United States for forfeitures, before the Clerk will issue a summons and process of arrest, attachment, or garnishment to any party, including intervenors, under Supplemental Rules B and C, the pleadings, the affidavit required by Supplemental Rule B, and accompanying supporting papers must be reviewed by a judicial officer. If the judicial officer finds the conditions set forth in Supplemental Rule B or C appear to exist, as appropriate, the judicial officer shall authorize the Clerk to issue process. Supplemental process or alias process may thereafter be issued by the Clerk upon application without further order of the Court.
- (b) Exigent Circumstances. If the plaintiff or his or her attorney certifies by affidavit submitted to the Clerk that exigent circumstances make review impracticable, the Clerk shall issue a summons and warrant of arrest or process of attachment and garnishment. In actions by the United States for forfeiture for federal statutory violations, the Clerk, upon filing of the complaint, shall forthwith issue a summons and warrant for the arrest of the vessel or other property without requiring a certification of exigent circumstances.
- (c) Personal Appearance. Unless otherwise required by the judicial officer, the review by the judicial officer will not require the presence of the applicant or its attorney but shall be based upon the pleadings and other papers submitted on behalf of that party.
- (d) Order. Upon approving the application for arrest, attachment, or garnishment, the judicial officer will issue an order to the Clerk authorizing the Clerk to issue an order for arrest, attachment, or garnishment. The proposed form of order authorizing the arrest, attachment, or garnishment, and the order of arrest, attachment, or garnishment shall be submitted with the other documents for review.
- (e) Request for Review. Except in cases of exigent circumstances, application for review shall be made by filing a "Notice of Request For

Review In Accordance With Supplemental Rule B or C" with the Clerk and stating therein the process sought and any time requirements within which the request must be reviewed. The Clerk shall contact the judicial officer to whom the matter is assigned to arrange for the necessary review. It will be the duty of the applicant to ensure that the application has been reviewed and, upon approval, presented to the Clerk for issuance of the appropriate order.

4. Process Held in Abeyance. If a party does not wish the process to be issued at the time of filing the action, the party shall request that issuance of process be held in abeyance. It will not be the responsibility of the Clerk or the marshal to ensure that process is issued at a later date.
5. Arrest by Marshal Required. Only a marshal shall arrest or attach a vessel, cargo or other tangible property.
6. Instructions to the Marshal. The party who requests a warrant of arrest or process of attachment or garnishment shall provide instructions to the marshal.
7. Property in Possession of United States Officer. When the property to be attached or arrested is in the custody of an employee or officer of the United States, the marshal will deliver a copy of the complaint and warrant of arrest or summons and process of attachment or garnishment to that officer or employee if present, and otherwise to the custodian of the property. The marshal will instruct the officer or employee or custodian to retain custody of the property until ordered to do otherwise by a judicial officer.
8. Security for Costs. In an action under the Supplemental Rules, a party may move upon notice to all parties for an order to compel an adverse party to post security for costs with the Clerk pursuant to Supplemental Rule E(2)(b). Unless otherwise ordered, the amount of security shall be \$500. The party so ordered shall post the security within five (5) days after the order is entered. A party who fails to post security when due may not participate further in the proceedings. A party may move for an order increasing the amount of security for costs.
9. Adversary Hearing. The adversary hearing following arrest or attachment or garnishment that is called for in Supplemental Rule E(4)(f) shall be conducted

upon three days written notice to plaintiff, unless otherwise ordered. This rule shall have no application to suits for seamen's wages when process is issued upon a certification of sufficient cause filed pursuant to 46 U.S.C. §§ 603 and 604 or to actions by the United States for forfeitures.

10. Appraisal. An order for appraisal of property so that security may be given or altered will be entered by the Clerk at the request of any interested party. If the parties do not agree in writing upon an appraiser, a judicial officer will appoint the appraiser. The appraiser shall be sworn to the faithful and impartial discharge of the appraiser's duties before any federal or state officer authorized by law to administer oaths. The appraiser shall give one day's notice of the time and place of making the appraisal to counsel of record. The appraiser shall promptly file the appraisal with the Clerk and serve it upon counsel of record. The appraiser's fee will be paid by the moving party, unless otherwise ordered or agreed, but it is a taxable cost of the action.
11. Security Deposit for Arrest or Attachment of Vessels. The first party who seeks arrest or attachment of a vessel or property aboard a vessel shall deposit with the marshal the sum estimated by the marshal to be sufficient to cover the expenses of the marshal including, but not limited to dockage, keepers, maintenance, and insurance for at least ten (10) days. The marshal is not required to execute process until the deposit is made. The party shall advance additional sums from time to time as requested to cover the marshal's estimated expenses until the property is released or disposed of as provided in Supplemental Rule E.
12. Intervenors' Claims.
  - (a) Presentation of Claim. When a vessel or other property has been arrested, attached or garnished, and is in the hands of the marshal or custodian substituted therefor, anyone having a claim against the vessel or property is required to present the claim by filing an intervening complaint, and not by filing an original complaint, unless otherwise ordered by a judicial officer. The Clerk shall forthwith deliver a conformed copy of the complaint in intervention and the intervenor's warrant of arrest or process of attachment or garnishment to the marshal, who shall deliver the same to the vessel or custodian of the property. Intervenors shall thereafter be subject to the rights and obligations of parties, and the vessel or property shall stand arrested,

attached, or garnished by the intervenor. An intervenor shall not be required to advance a security deposit to the marshal.

- (b) Sharing Marshal's Fees and Expenses. An intervenor shall owe a debt to the first plaintiff, enforceable on motion, consisting of the intervenor's share of the marshal's fees and expenses in the proportion that the intervenor's claim bears to the sum of all the claims. If a party plaintiff permits vacation of an arrest, attachment, or garnishment, remaining plaintiffs share the responsibility to the marshal for fees and expenses in proportion to the remaining claims and for the duration of the marshal's custody because of each claim.

13. Custody of Property.

- (a) Safekeeping of Property. When a vessel, cargo, or other property is brought into the marshal's custody by arrest or attachment, the marshal shall arrange for adequate safekeeping, which may include the placing of keepers on or near the vessel. Upon motion a substitute custodian in place of the marshal may be appointed by order of the Court.
- (b) Insurance. The marshal may procure insurance to protect the marshal, his or her deputies, keepers, and substitute custodians, from liabilities assumed in arresting and holding the vessel, cargo, or other property, and in performing whatever services may be undertaken to protect the vessel, cargo, or other property, and to maintain the Court's custody. The party who applies for removal of the vessel, cargo, or other property to another location, for designation of a substitute custodian, or for other relief that will require an additional premium, shall reimburse the marshal therefor. The premiums charged for the liability insurance are taxable as administrative costs while the vessel, cargo, or other property is in custody of the Court.
- (c) Vessel Operations. Following arrest or attachment of a vessel, no cargo handling, repairs, or movement may be made without an order of Court. The applicant for such an order shall give notice to the marshal and to all parties of record. Upon proof of adequate insurance coverage of the applicant to indemnify the marshal for his or her liability, the Court may direct the marshal to permit cargo handling, repairs, movement of the vessel, or other operations. Before or after

the marshal has taken custody of a vessel, cargo or other property, any party of record may move for an order to dispense with keepers or to remove to or place the vessel, cargo, or other property at a specified facility, to designate a substitute custodian or for similar relief. Notice of the motion shall be given to the marshal and to all parties of record. The judicial officer will require that adequate insurance on the property be maintained by the successor to the marshal, before issuing the order to change arrangements.

- (d) Claims by Suppliers for Payment of Charges. A person who furnishes supplies or services to a vessel, cargo, or other property in custody of the Court who has not been paid and claims the right to payment as an expense of administration shall file an invoice with the Clerk in the form of a verified claim at any time before the vessel, cargo, or other property is released or sold. The supplier must serve copies of the claim on the marshal, substitute custodian if one has been appointed, and all parties of record. The Court may consider the claims individually or schedule a single hearing for all claims.

14. Sale of Property.

- (a) Notice. Notice of sale of arrested or attached property shall be published in one or more newspapers to be specified in the order for sale. Unless otherwise ordered by a judge upon a showing of urgency or impracticality or unless otherwise provided by law, such notice shall be published for at least six consecutive days before the date of sale.
- (b) Payment of Bid. Unless otherwise provided in the order, in all public auction sales by the marshal under orders of sale in admiralty and maritime claims, the marshal shall require of the last and highest bidder at the sale a minimum deposit in cash, certified check or cashier's check, of the full purchase price if it does not exceed \$500, and otherwise \$500 or ten percent of the bid, whichever is greater. The balance, if any, of the purchase price shall be paid in cash, certified check or cashier's check before confirmation of the sale or within three days of the dismissal of any opposition which may have been filed, exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. Notwithstanding the above, a plaintiff or intervening plaintiff foreclosing a properly recorded and endorsed preferred mortgage on, or other valid security

interest in, the vessel may bid, without payment of cash, certified check, or cashier's check, up to the total amount of the secured indebtedness as established by affidavit filed and served by that party on all other parties no later than ten (10) days prior to the date of sale.

- (c) Report and Confirmation. At the conclusion of the sale, the marshal shall forthwith file a written report to the Court of the fact of sale, the price obtained and the name and address of the buyer. The Clerk of the Court shall endorse upon such report the time and date of its filing. If within three days, exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, no written objection is filed, the sale shall stand confirmed as of course, without the necessity of any affirmative action thereon by the Court, and the Clerk upon request shall so state to the marshal in writing; except that no sale shall stand confirmed until the buyer has complied fully with the terms of his or her purchase. If no opposition to the sale is filed, the expenses of keeping the property pending confirmation of sale shall be charged against the party bearing expenses before the sale (subject to taxation as costs), except that if confirmation is delayed by the purchaser's failure to pay any balance which is due on the price, the cost of keeping the property subsequent to the three-day period hereinabove specified shall be borne by the purchaser.
- (d) Penalty for Late Payment of Balance. A successful bidder who fails to pay the balance of the bid within the time allowed under these rules or a different time specified by the Court shall also pay the marshal the costs of keeping the property from the date payment of the balance was due to the date the bidder pays the balance and takes delivery of the property. Unless otherwise ordered by the Court, the marshal shall refuse to release the property until the additional charge is paid.
- (e) Penalty for Default in Payment of Balance. A successful bidder who fails to pay the balance of the bid within the time allowed is in default and the Court may at any time thereafter order a sale to the second highest bidder or order a new sale as appropriate. Any sum deposited by the bidder in default shall be applied to pay any additional costs incurred by the marshal by reason of the default, including costs incident to resale. The balance of the deposit, if any, shall be retained in the registry subject to further order of the Court, and the Court shall

be given written notice of its existence whenever the registry deposits are reviewed.

- (f) Opposition to Sale. A party filing an opposition to the sale, whether seeking the reception of a higher bid or a new public sale by the marshal, shall give prompt notice to all other parties and to the purchaser. Such party shall also, prior to filing an opposition, secure the marshal's endorsement upon it acknowledging deposit with the marshal of the necessary expense of keeping the property for at least five days. Pending the Court's determination of the opposition, such party shall also advance any further expense at such times and in such amounts as the marshal shall request, or as the Court orders upon application of the marshal or the opposing party. Such expense may later be subject to taxation as costs. In the event of failure to make such advance, the opposition shall fail without necessity for affirmative action thereon by the Court. If the opposition fails, the expense of keeping the property during its pendency shall be borne by the party filing the opposition.
- (g) Disposition of Deposits.
  - (1) Objection Sustained. If an objection is sustained, sums deposited by the successful bidder will be returned to the bidder forthwith. The sum deposited by the objector will be applied to pay the fees and expenses incurred by the marshal in keeping the property until it is resold, and any balance remaining shall be returned to the objector. The objector will be reimbursed from the proceeds of a subsequent sale for the expense of keeping the property.
  - (2) Objection Overruled. If the objection is overruled, the sum deposited by the objector will be applied to pay the expense of keeping the property from the day the objection was filed until the day the sale is confirmed, and any balance remaining will be returned to the objector forthwith.

## **LAR F - Limitation Of Liability.**

1. Security for Costs. The amount of security for costs under Supplemental Rule F(1) shall be \$1000 unless otherwise ordered and it may be combined with the security for value and interest.
2. Order of Proof at Trial. Where the vessel interests seeking statutory limitation of liability have raised the statutory defense by way of answer or complaint, the plaintiff in the former or the damage claimant in the latter shall proceed with its proof first, as in normal civil trials.

## **LAR G - Miscellaneous.**

1. Deserting Seamen Cases.
  - (a) Service. Upon filing a verified petition for return of wages deposited in the registry of the Court by a Coast Guard official to whom the duties of shipping commissioner have been delegated pursuant to the provisions of 46 U.S.C. § 11505, a copy of the petition shall be served forthwith on the United States Attorney and a copy mailed to the Attorney General of the United States, after which a sworn return of such service and mailing shall be filed.
  - (b) Time to Plead. The United States has twenty days after receipt of a copy of the petition by the United States Attorney in which to file its responsive pleading and claim.
2. Rate of Prejudgment Interest Allowed. Unless a judge directs otherwise or as provided by statute, prejudgment interest shall be awarded at the rate authorized in 28 U.S.C. § 1961, providing for interest on judgments.
3. Assignment of Actions. If the judge to whom a case under the Local Admiralty Rules has been assigned is not readily available, any matter pertaining to arrest, attachment, garnishment, security or release may be presented to any other judicial officer in the district without reassigning the case.



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